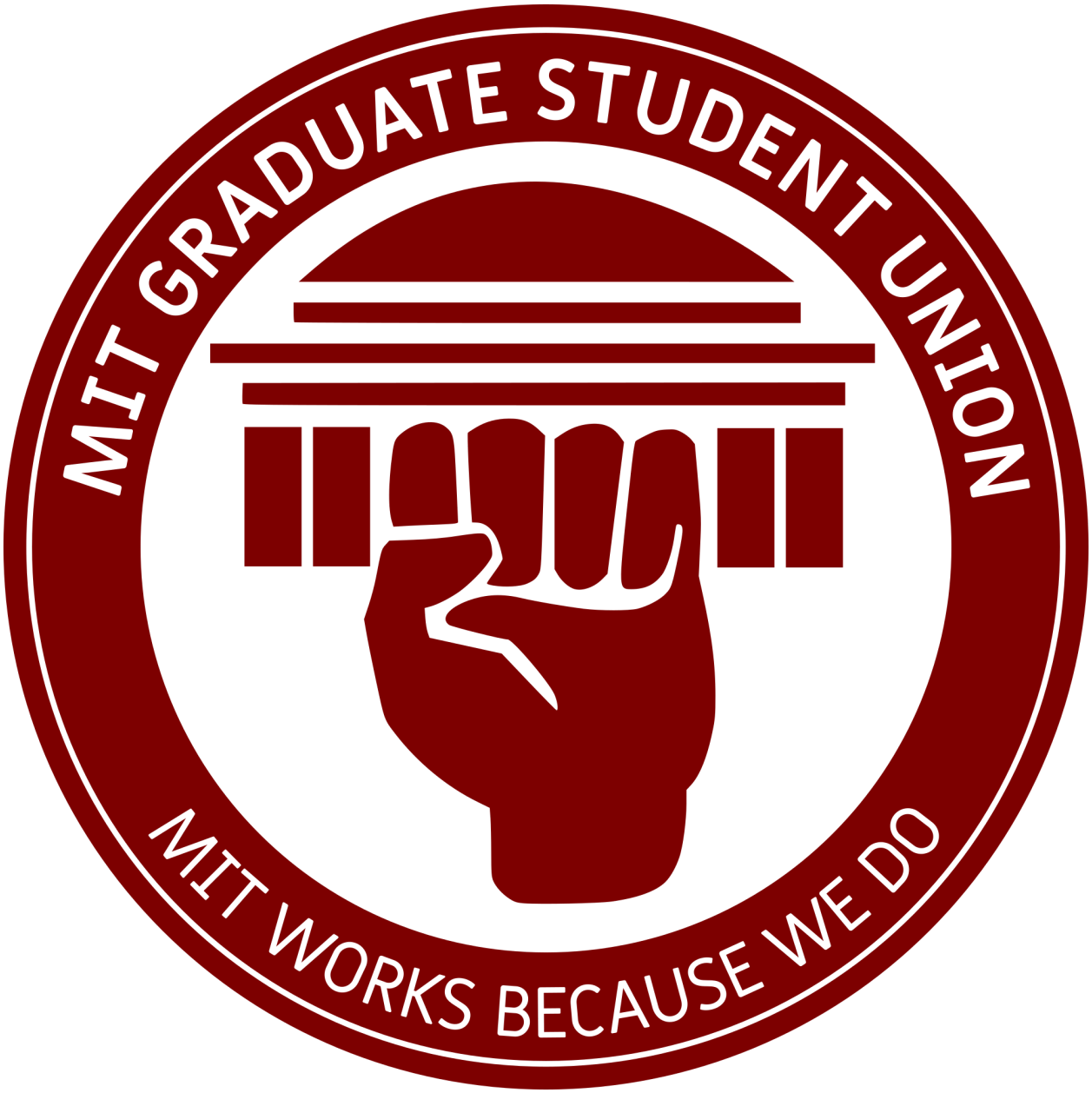
Department Coordinator Handbook



Role of Department Coordination

The union's ability to coordinate collective activity across the vast majority of the student body, bringing students together in solidarity across disciplines and differences in life circumstances for their collective interests, requires building an active layer of strategic leadership which we call department coordinators.

Department coordinators' primary tasks are:

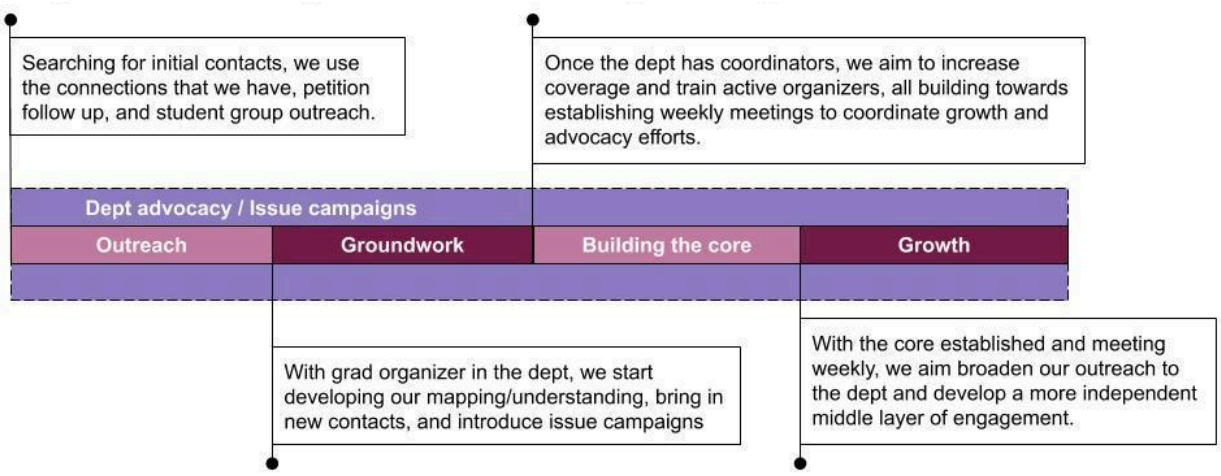
- **Identifying common issues and getting a pulse of the department**
- **Identifying and recruiting leaders**
- **Mapping and growth of organization**
- **Planning and executing concerted action**

Below we go into each of these aspects of the department coordination role. It is worth remembering that not every aspect of this will be immediately applicable to every department. The section below on stages of development can help to understand which of these tasks will be more relevant to the state of a given department and what you should focus on. We also provide various practical tools in this document which we encourage department coordinators to become familiar with. Please communicate any feedback or questions to our staff organizer, Jeff Rosenberg (mitgsu.staff@gmail.com).

As a note for issue campaign coordinators, many of these lessons are also important for any kind of issue campaign coordination, not just because the tasks of issue coordination and department coordination overlap, but because the only way that we can successfully go about successful issue campaign organizing is by understanding and activating the apparatus of our department coordination structure.

Stages of Development in Departmental Organizing

The main tasks that department organizers face at any given time will differ based on what stage of development we are in with department level organization. The stages we think about typically include **outreach, groundwork, building the core, and growth**. Here are some brief descriptions of the main task and characteristics of each phase.


Searching for initial contacts, we use the connections that we have, petition follow up, and student group outreach.
Once the dept has coordinators, we aim to increase coverage and train active organizers, all building towards establishing weekly meetings to coordinate growth and advocacy efforts.
Dept advocacy / Issue campaigns
Outreach
Groundwork
Building the core
Growth
With grad organizer in the dept, we start developing our mapping/understanding, bring in new contacts, and introduce issue campaigns
With the core established and meeting weekly, we aim broaden our outreach to the dept and develop a more independent middle layer of engagement.

- **Outreach:** Main task is finding initial contacts. We use the connections we have, petition follow up, student group outreach, etc.. We must provide extra mentorship and guidance at this level. Operating in this phase can be challenging and so thinking about how to expand from here should be a priority.
- **Groundwork:** Main task is developing our mapping/understanding, bringing in new contacts through conversations and early stages of the recruitment pipeline. To ensure we don't burn people out, establishing a few people who can begin to connect with each other about organizing the department will be very important for building a more sustainable and engaged set of organizers.
- **Building the core:** Main tasks are to train department coordinators, increase coverage and train active organizers, all building towards establishing weekly meetings to coordinate growth and advocacy efforts. At this point, we also need to start building connections with the department organizers and the rest of the union's work if this has not been happening yet. This can be done through meeting core organizers in other departments and participating in issue campaigns or regular recruitment tasks (orientations, mixers, discussion groups, etc.).
- **Growth:** With the core established and meeting weekly, the main tasks are to broaden our outreach to the rest of the department and develop a more active middle layer of engagement through mentorship and consistent follow up.

Dept advocacy / issue campaigns: Throughout the process of organizing the dept, we must constantly be working to advocate for grad worker interests and to bring our institute issue campaigns into our dept organizing with the particularities and needs of the dept in mind. Our issue campaigns drive our organizing work and our organizing work drives our issue campaigns, so the two must go hand in hand. Actively advocating for the interests of our peers also allows us to take on a leadership role in the department.

Concretely, here are some ways we connect issue organizing work in our department organizing. In the outreach phase, we reach out to student leaders about our campaigns and their work, also following up on petition signatures, to find those who want to build a stronger connection and work with us. Once we are laying the groundwork, we should be getting a sense

of the issue landscape in the department and finding ways to more actively introduce our issue campaigns into the department. With a better understanding of the department's biggest issues, we can better understand how to introduce our own campaigns and collaborate with any existing advocacy. Once we have a core of organizers in the department, we can actively push to organize a broader group of grad workers around collective action and start to expand engagement and broaden the comfort zone for collective action.

Going public

Our organizing work across the union now has a growing urgency as we are hoping to have the union drive go public as early as **February 2021**. To be prepared to go public, there are a few boxes we believe are critical to check as far as campus coverage and coordination are concerned. We need to have **coverage, assessment, and education.** This section will discuss how we assess our preparation for going public simply in terms of organizing across departments, not in terms of combating talking points (covered in a separate training) or the timeline itself for establishing a recognized union with a contact (covered in more detail in the START HERE guide).

Our heuristic for coverage is that every grad worker will know at least one grad worker who is publicly pro-union who they can talk to about the union. That means coverage that is spread across the whole campus. To do this effectively, we need to set concretely numerical targets and break that down into achievable goals (weekly targets for conversations, orientations, and training) along the way with a plan to win. We are currently aiming for a minimum of 30% contacted in each department before we go public, and building the capacity to speak with all grad workers once we do go public. That capacity in particular is what we especially need to focus on prior to going public. It means having training organizers across the entire campus who are able and willing to publicly support the union and organize those around them to support and join.

Further, to truly prepare the campus for going public, we should also have an **accurate pulse** of where our co-workers stand on unionization by speaking directly to as many of them as possible. This will also help us to see what are the issues which resonate most with our co-workers to understand what will inspire them to see the **benefit of collective action in the form of a union**. This can only be done accurately in one-on-one organizing conversations which is touched on in a section below.

Once we go public, the anti-union campaign from the admin will really get going. Chances are, they know there is a union effort and they may even know G4HMIT, RISE, and COVID Relief are all a part of it. However, when we publicly announce our intention to form a union to the campus, it signals to the bosses along with everyone else that we have entered a new stage of our organization and they will come at us hard. We have run a training in the past on combating anti-union talking points (keep an eye out for one if you would like to attend). For now, suffice to say they will use their ability to access all students and speak with authority to sew confusion,

fear, and distrust about unionizing. It is our job to educate our peers about the reality of unionizing and to build trust between the GSU and the grad student body.

Building up towards going public, development of our departmental organizing, specifically with the goals of coverage, assessment, and education, is the crucial task we currently face for our union drive to succeed.

Common issues and getting the pulse of the department

Organizing conversations
Our union is a growth based organization, where the strength and longevity of our union depend on our ability to recruit and develop a solid base of support. Organizing conversations remain one of our most important tools for union growth, so they are crucial for department coordinators to understand and implement within their departments. Department coordinators might recall one of the most important takeaways from organizer training, the “80/20 rule,” which means that during an organizing conversation you should spend 80% of the time listening and only 20% of the time speaking. It is important to keep in mind that we are not trying to tell people what their issues are, rather we want to determine what they as an individual are upset about. If no issues immediately come up in conversation, you can try to get at their issues by asking them questions like, “What would you change at MIT?” or “What is your biggest source of stress?” If they don’t seem to have many complaints, you can also ask questions like “What is something you like about your department that you would like other MIT students to also have / want to protect from being taken away?”

After determining the issues that an individual cares about, we want to make sure that we agitate around those issues and get upset with them. We want them to feel heard and validated -- their issues are union issues! If nothing seems to upset them about the Institute and they are pretty pleased with life in their department, try to appeal to their sense of solidarity that other students/departments might not enjoy some of the benefits that they have.

The end goal of an organizing conversation is to try to build more union support, so after agitating around their issues we can provide examples of how unions can help. A great way to do this is by providing concrete examples of what other grad student unions have been able to win where applicable, and if not, then by providing examples of what our union is currently fighting for. Although department coordinators may be involved in recruitment to varying degrees, especially in more developed departments where organizers may split up areas of work, it is important for *all* of our department coordinators to keep this growth mindset as they organize within their departments.

Student group involvement
Student group involvement is crucial to getting the pulse of a department; many of the students who are involved in student groups are passionate about making changes and will already be plugged into the issues and ongoing work in the department. With this being said, student groups are a great resource for recruitment and building up our base of support. We also

encourage getting our union organizers involved in these student groups, especially if there is misleadership within these groups. Getting a younger organizer involved in such groups can be a great way to shake things up. This is something that has been done deliberately in the Chemistry Department and has been successful in getting around anti-union or union hesitant leaders.

Student group involvement is also a great way to grow our power and help with collective action. Getting GSU organizers involved with student groups will not only help us learn more about a department's issues but also make sure we are presenting a united front, which is key to building enough power to make change. On a similar note, getting student groups within the department to communicate with each other and work together will also help with this. In ChemE the student groups recently made a joint slack channel to keep each other up to date with ongoing efforts, and similarly in the ChemE/BE/DMSE Diversity Officer (DO) push, the advocacy-based student groups from each of these departments signed onto an email appealing to the Department Heads to approach the Provost with a proposal to hire individual departmental DOs rather than a shared one.

As we prepare to go public, strong relationships with and ties to various student groups will be beneficial to hopefully gain their endorsement and broaden our support. Ideally we will also work very closely with these student groups such that we can support each other's efforts. We are getting to this place with some of our student group allies through partnerships sparked from the RISE campaign and are moving in that direction with a few more. Continuing to build these relationships as we approach going public will be crucial to building our base of support and gaining more momentum with the broader graduate student body.

Agitation around issues

Just as we agitate around an individual's issues during an organizing conversation, we can also agitate around common issues within a department. Larger scale agitation can be executed by working with student groups and reaching out to the broader student body within a department. Efforts like circulating departmental petitions, sending update emails from student groups to the rest of the department, zoom backgrounds, and posters can all help agitate around common department issues.

When thinking about this larger scale agitation around departmental issues, aside from thinking about the proper method for agitation in a given department, department coordinators must also consider the proper moments for action. Departmental town halls provide a great opportunity to agitate around issues. Organizers can craft and ask questions of the department leadership to try to make them expose themselves on departmental issues. Additionally, we can identify potential leaders and GSU recruits based on who else might be asking some of these difficult questions. After the town hall is over, if students are not satisfied with the answers given to the difficult questions, we can agitate around these feelings of dissatisfaction.

Crisis moments within a department are a prime time to agitate. For example, the controversies around Professor Richard Stallman in EECS, funding taken from Epstein in the Media Lab,

inability to access to COVID pass in the Whitehead, the Shell auditorium in EAPS have all served as targeted moments where the student body agitated around common issues. During these crisis moments, we of course want our organizers to try to talk to those in the department leadership who can fix these issues, but we also want to emphasize to the broader student body that the most effective and efficient way to fix these issues is through collective action, which is why a union is necessary.

Lastly, department coordinators can tie into efforts in other departments or broader campaigns to agitate in their own department. Some examples where this has been done successfully recently include, but are not limited to, agitating around RISE demands (especially ones that directly involve multiple departments such as issues of shared DOs), COVID relief, and international student bans.

Identify and recruit leaders

When we are trying to build out union support and coordination, we don't just go and talk to the first 10 people we see. Instead, we think strategically about who is most likely to be supportive and who are the people who will have the drive and influence to win over others. **We want to find and recruit leaders.** What makes someone a leader? According to Labor Notes, a leader is someone who has followers. So why would people have followers?

When we think about natural leaders, they are people who will have the trust and respect of their peers. This can come from being respected for their ability as a researcher, or their service to the department, or their good nature and relationships with those around them. We can find leaders by asking ourselves and our peers who do we turn to if we have questions? Who do we know is always in the loop? Who do we know is going to speak up if something is wrong? Or who is always bringing people together? Maybe they are in student leadership or support positions already. Maybe they are the person who asked hard questions of the department head at the last town hall. Or maybe they are the person in your lab standing up to their boss about working conditions

Keep in mind that no leader is going to be a leader to everyone. Many of us are leaders to some group of our peers. All leaders will see someone else as a leader too, or as someone they respect and trust. It is important for us to think about who is a leader to different groups of people and ensure we are recruiting leaders as widely as possible. Not everyone we talk to, if they are a leader or not, is going to be ready to organize with the union. That is totally fine and it doesn't mean your organizing conversations with them "failed." One critical thing to remember when we talk to grad workers is to always ask them who they know who would be interested, and in this case, who do they respect as a leader, that they can connect us with to continue to broaden our outreach. Keeping leaders in the loop and looking for opportunities to tap them for connections based on those relationships of familiarity, trust, and respect is essential for building the union.

Recruitment pipeline

Recruitment isn't something that just happens all at once. When we are reaching out to people to talk to them about the union, build support, and get them involved, we use the idea of a recruitment pipeline. The recruitment pipeline doesn't need to be taken as prescriptive and can be different depending on the person, but it is extremely helpful for thinking about the order of steps that most people should progress through. We don't want to try to skip someone up too quickly past any of the steps because it can actually be harmful if someone isn't ready for that step yet and instead responds negatively too it (i.e. attending a training or OC before they have done an orientation). Each step should leave people feeling more comfortable and prepared for the next step.

Before diving into the specifics of the recruitment pipeline, there are some general goals that can characterize the phases of the recruitment pipeline. They can overlap and shouldn't be interpreted too mechanically.

- **Familiarity:** Initially we are having organizing conversations, primarily trying to let people know about the organization and do our best to learn enough about them to figure out the right way to get them more involved. We try to make sure everyone gets the basics about who we are, how we operate, what we are trying to accomplish, and how they can play a role in it.
- **Engagement:** Help people to get involved in the work by giving them all the resources they need, provide assistance by taking on tasks together or at least making a clear offer of support, and continue to on-board about the particulars of the work we are engaged in, why it matters, how it fits in more broadly, and any technical aspects to it.
- **Mentorship:** Developing leaders requires development of a union perspective about what the organization needs and thinking about the challenges that we face. We also need to give organizers ample opportunity to safely try new things and learn. Developing confidence is also very valuable and we can do so deliberately by being supportive and giving people the opportunity to lead.

With those goals for recruitment understood, the recruitment pipeline itself looks like the following:

- **Introductory organizing conversation** on the union or an issue campaign
- Attend an **orientation session**
- **Follow up conversation** on the orientation and how to get more involved, even more effective as a 2-on-1
- Involvement in **committee, departmental, or issue campaign work**
- **Organizer training**
- **2-on-1** organizing conversations (mentee)
- **Co-facilitating** a meeting or orientation session
- **2-on-1** organizing conversations (mentor)
- **Department coordination** and **OC participation**

Mapping and growth

Dividing up turf

When we are thinking about the approach to organizing our departments and MIT more broadly, we need to be able to self-reflect and evaluate our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, or what many organizers call “SWOT.” One of the first steps we can take to get at this is through mapping and listwork. The questions we need to be asking ourselves are: Where do we have a presence or where our strengths? What divisions or groups do we have no union presence? In the cases where we have no presence, who does one of our organizers know that is an “in” to the group? We should capture all of this to figure out how our limited resources can be divided and focused. Mapping makes the task of organizing the department less daunting and more systematic.

Departments are one of the most natural divisions of all the eligible union members, and department coordinators are responsible for growing our coverage, presence, and engagement in each department. There are also ways that turf can be divided up further within the department. Some departments, like EECS and Chemistry, have different research areas that students are further divided up into, for which we aim to have proportionate union coverage. Of course within these research areas there are also different research groups, where within each group we would ideally have at least one union representative. The core group of organizers that meets weekly in the department should ideally represent the top-most “division” of turf. That way we have a sense of what is going on and are queued into each sub-division: what are the issues, who are the active student groups, who are the leaders, what are the existing organizing efforts, and what opportunities are there to get involved or get others involved? It’s not enough to just cast a wide net and reach a ton of contacts. If there is no structure for follow-up or engagement in the organizing (which one person cannot do single-handedly), then we are left with people who are pro but who are not engaged, and thus not invested in building the union. We need to ensure that they are given the opportunity to do so.

Within each department, each core member should have a list of contacts that they are responsible for engaging and bringing into the union and increasing involvement. This includes follow-up, sending them information about orientations, organizer training, checking in on contacts, and sending regular union updates which they can use in their organizing conversations. We also want to make sure that in our mapping we are cognizant of demographics. We must include people who are often left out and have acute issues that we should be aware of and organize around. This includes people of color (URMs in particular), women, and international students, to name a few.

Driving consistent growth

The union is a growth-based organization. We need majority support to win an election - and although it is a challenge, it is precisely what makes us so powerful - the numbers and engagement! Direct contacts that people immediately think of off the dome may be exhausted pretty quickly. So how can we drive consistent growth through mapping?

In the department mapping, what we've found to be effective is to list each person in each group in each division. Go through the list with core and active organizers in each division (potentially in separate meetings from the weekly core) to identify who we know in the group (filter should be light - who can we reach out to that their response isn't "who tf are you"). If we have a sense of the lay of the land in the group, who are the organic leaders? Come up with a plan to reach out to people in the group (even if they are light contacts) to build relationships, establish a presence, and grow the union in the group. If we don't know the organic leader or the lay of the land, we can use our "light" contacts to build that out. Try to organize the organic leader. They will have a lot of sway in the group. To have them be open about being pro-union will go a long way for those whose default position is hesitant or even anti. If someone they trust is pro, then they are more likely to be pro as well, and even get involved.

There are also other ways to drive growth such as cold contacts from petitions and mixers. These sources really allowed the EECS core to cast a wide net. Contacts from DEI petitions really took their organizing to the next level.

Coverage

Mapping out our workplace allows us to track our progress and coverage. "Coverage" refers to who we have contacted and had conversations with about the union. If we want to go public in February, we have a lot of work to do! It is not just about the volume of the contacts but also about the type. Who are we contacting? What division are they in? What group? Are they involved in student groups? What cohort? What demographics? These are questions we can start getting answers to and solving through mapping.

When mapping we should aim for proportionate representation. Having an organizer and voice of the union in each division and ideally in each research group demonstrates that their issues are the union's issues and allows us to share what is going on. This also goes a long way in building up engagement and is the beginnings of a steward structure. How well connected and participatory our membership is really defines what we can win! If there are hundreds of people who can't even identify a union member, let alone in their group, we leave out a huge group of people.

Listwork and the organizing grind

Listwork allows us to grow our coverage systematically. With our lists we can keep track of new contacts, when you contacted them, and about what. Listwork also allows us to track the growth of organizers through the recruitment pipeline and answer questions about their development as an organizer including:

- Who? When did you last contact? Where did you leave off?
- Where in the pipeline are there? Orientation? Organizer training? RISE?
- How engaged are they? Where can you bring them to? What's the plan to do it?
- Can start to identify what paths of development are the most effective?

Every coordinator should have a list that they update weekly to track one-on-ones, follow-up with active organizers, and more. Listwork is also a great way for new organizers to find contacts. Often times new organizers find it hard to think about who they should talk to. But throw up a list, and suddenly people start to identify more potential contacts than they could remember. **The collective assessment of each contact can also help gameplan for the conversation.** Lastly, in referring back to our lists periodically we can assess progress and make sure we are on track with our goals for growth.

Structure tests & monthly objectives
"Structure tests" and monthly objectives allow us to evaluate how effective our structure is. Structure tests give us a sense of how far reaching our network is, how connected we are, and our level of engagement across the department. Examples of such tests can include the number of petition signatures on a recent department petition or the number of attendees at a mixer.

Setting monthly objectives collectively at weekly coordination meetings can help to ensure that these structure tests succeed. Consider setting goals for the number of new one-on-ones, number of people sent to an orientation, and number of people to attend an organizer training. Lastly, although these structure tests are valuable, structure should be flexible. It is important for coordinators to be able to adapt as needed based on the conditions in your department!

Mentorship and Organizer Development

We should always offer organizers **opportunities for development** in which they can try out new skills and tasks with the support of more experienced organizers. Sometimes this means that a task won't be done quite right or can take more time from other organizers, but if we do not give people opportunities to develop these skills then we'll end up with **some organizers burning out and others drifting for lack of interest and engagement**. Even without that, people will graduate and so every role must be passed along.

To deal with this, we must always have a mindset for mentorship and growth. Most of us are not natural born organizers or leaders, and so we must give everyone opportunities to develop. Good mentorship is about inviting everyone to have a chance to learn and grow and to flatten barriers as much as possible to give equal opportunity for that growth. As we look for leaders, they will always have room to grow. Working in the union should present all with opportunities for that growth.

Reflection questions
- **How were you recruited and how did you get more involved?**
- **How can you identify and recruit leaders in your department? Give an example of a leader you should recruit and how you can try to do it.**

2-1 Mentoring Practices
Two-on-one (2-1) organizing conversations are a critical tool for expanding our outreach and engagement with the MIT grad worker community. Sometimes we will have opportunities where

a union supportive grad worker will not be so interested in getting more involved, but will have people they can connect us with. Those are good opportunities to have an experienced organizer drop in and not worry as much about mentoring. However, 2-1s are not just an opportunity to have our strongest or most knowledgeable organizers engaged in organizing conversations. These conversations are an opportunity for us to deliberately develop newer organizers. Mentorship practices will differ based on the needs and strengths of each organizer, but there will be a typical format to approaching these conversations. Don't forget you can use the organizing conversation structure reference to help guide this planning/mentoring.

1. **Make a plan**
    a. Before going into an organizing conversation, it is best to meet with the organizer joining you for the conversation to get on the same page about background for the conversation and goals (think asks for getting involved).
    b. The organizers should try to decide generally if the mentee would prefer to take on a more observational role or a leading role.
        i. If the mentee organizer is not yet comfortable leading an organizing conversation, then it is still important to make sure they lead for a section of the conversation. A more structured section, like providing an overview of an issue campaign or introducing the union, can be a well defined section that helps mentee organizers to gain more confidence.
        ii. If the mentee organizer is feeling more comfortable leading the conversation, then the mentor organizer can be there more for support in the conversation when it is needed, especially around challenging and/or detailed questions on our areas of work.
        iii. Since a 2-1 is an opportunity for a newer organizer to have the backup of a more experienced one, we encourage 2-1 mentees to try to lead at least one section of the conversation, if not more, as long as they feel comfortable. The more experienced organizer will be present to provide support as needed so it is a great opportunity to learn by doing!
    c. Ensure that before entering the conversation, you check in one more time to confirm the background, goals, and division of the conversation.
2. **Conversation**
    a. During the conversation itself, mentor and mentee organizers can explicitly hand the conversation back and forth while maintaining a focus on the 80/20 rule. This might manifest as a recruit asking a question and then either organizer checking if the other would like to try to answer it.
    b. Organizers should take notes during the conversation to be able to summarize aspects with a focus on next steps moving forward for the recruit. Additionally, these notes will be helpful in the debrief.
3. **Debrief**
    a. The organizers involved in a 2-1 should debrief ideally immediately following the conversation, or as soon as possible. This involves talking about any hanging unionization questions from the conversation, assessment of how our answers were received, assessment of where the recruit is in terms of union support and

potential for engagement, any challenges or discomfort in the conversation, and next steps for improvement.

b. This process is a really critical step for solidifying the lessons we gain through practice and thinking about how we carry them forward into future conversations. This is true whether the conversation has gone incredibly well, dismally, or anywhere in between. We all need practice and everyone can get better with practice!
c. Especially for new organizers, we can also take the debrief as an opportunity to introduce our tracking and the airtable. This is an important step to making sure that all of our organizers are familiar with these tools for keeping track of their contacts and ensuring strong assessment of union outreach and coverage. This is also a perfect opportunity to develop an initial list with new organizers so they can see who they should be responsible for reaching out to and start doing consistent listwork.

These practices are critical to the development of strong organizers throughout our campus by providing them with individualized coaching. Our ability to reinforce these practices with new, developing organizers and leaders in the union has the long term benefit of ensuring that when these organizers themselves become more equipped to lead conversations, they will also be practiced in deliberate mentorship, making it a deeply embedded aspect of our union's culture.

Orientation and Organizer Training Facilitation

Facilitating orientation sessions and organizer training are important tasks in the development of all of our organizers and leaders. Facilitating an orientation session can be understood as leading a highly structured group organizing conversation in which we go through basics of unionizing and answer common questions, often connected to specific areas of work. Ideally, facilitators are able to feel more confident presenting on this basic union material after they have led a facilitation and as we may need to increase frequency of orientations during the peak of our drive, we will also need a large pool of people prepared to take on sessions so we can distribute the task. We should prioritize organizers/leaders in newer departments co-facilitating with an experienced facilitator to ensure that we are starting those departments off strong with some core members who have the basic union talking points down.

Organizer training facilitation is another important task, though one which requires less frequent participation. Facilitating organizer training is important for bringing in a wide range of experiences into our discussions in the training itself. The main benefit is training our leaders in more developed departments to be prepared to effectively mentor the organizers in their department in having organizing conversations on an ongoing basis. Any department which holds weekly coordination meetings or has many active organizers being coordinated should aim to have department coordinators or other leaders facilitated in an upcoming training to bring those skills back to their ongoing department work.

Department Coordination Staff Organizer Check-ins / OC Updates

Department coordination staff organizer check ins are meant to give us a high level view of what is happening in the department, assessment of organizing development, and discussion of broader union updates. The staff organizer can help to do this assessment on a regular basis, bringing together experiences from every department to share lessons and challenges.

Beyond these small group discussions, it can be important to have the entire OC also reflect on the state of organizing across the department. This can be done through brief updates from across the union or from individual departments providing in depth reports. For our brief departmental check ins at the OC, we try to ask the following questions.

- What is the state of union organization work in your department? (Coordinators, active organizers, weekly coordination meetings, etc.)
- How is your coverage in the department? Do you use mapping tools?
- Are you working on issue campaigns in your department?
- What were recent successful approaches to organizing in your department? Challenges you are facing?

Recruitment Mini Blitz

We have begun running regular recruitment mini blitz focused on accomplishing the following: **1) engage new and old organizers in outreach and recruitment activity, 2) train organizers to use Airtable and listwork, and 3) achieve a burst in recruitment activity.**

Our union is now in a critical phase of growth in preparation for announcing the union to the campus (“going public”) and hitting the ground with our card campaign to get over 65% of MIT grad workers to sign cards showing union support. We need to be reaching as many of our peers and co-workers as possible prior to going public, but even more importantly we need to have a significant number of union representatives, meaning trained organizers who are prepared to talk to their co-workers about the issues they face and how a union can help, and understand the basics of organizing. This mini blitz is the perfect opportunity to address both of these tasks. This is an opportunity for newer organizers to learn some critical skills and tools for outreach, engagement, and recruitment, and to get some direct mentorship and advice from more experienced organizers. This is also an important way to broaden the scope of our outreach and tap into all the contacts we have available, and develop the skills to run a blitz (meaning a concentrated burst of organizing activity by a group of organizers). A description of the logistics from our next upcoming mini blitz can be found here.

Coordinating department events

Focus on orientations, mixers, and listening sessions TKTKTK

Fight the Boss, Build the Union

Concerted action

Public, Collective, and Confrontational

Our union's approach to advocacy is public, collective, and confrontational. Being public in our approach is important because it helps to spread awareness of the issues, perhaps getting people who are typically not actively involved in bettering MIT or outsiders involved in further pressuring the administration. MIT also hates bad press, so being public will get them to respond to our demands faster because they do not want to tarnish their reputation. Being collective is important because of the huge power imbalance that exists between grad workers and MIT administration. Alone we have no power, but collectively we can support each other in our demands to improve MIT. Lastly, when we say confrontational we do not mean rude, we just mean being assertive, clear, and firm in what we want. We will take a collaborative path when we can, but it is often the case that MIT will not make actionable change when students take the collaborative path, in which case we must be confrontational.

Moments for action
As mentioned in the section on "Agitation around issues", choosing the proper moments for action can be just as important as the action itself. Some great opportunities for action include departmental and institute-wide town halls, crisis moments within the department, as well as tying into efforts in other departments or broader institute-wide campaigns.

Negotiating with the boss
When planning out how to deal with the boss in a meeting -- including how to prepare, how to maintain a united front, how to maintain control of the direction of the meeting, when to escalate, and how to follow up -- we have compiled some tips for meeting with administrators. We encourage all organizers to review this document before going into a meeting with the boss.

Tools of the trade

Airtable
Airtable is a critical tool for our organizers and especially our department coordinators to make use of to enable a systematic approach to our organizing work. Airtable is a database containing all the grad workers at MIT and information about how the campus population is divided into departments, cohorts, labs, student groups, and for keeping track of who we have spoken to and their stance on unionization. This allows us to ensure that we can reach everyone on campus, encourage their participation, and work to bring in their voice. Especially in the course of our organizing drive this tool is indispensable to the success of the union. A more detailed user guide is available here.

Department mapping tools
Mapping out the department is described above, but we wanted to show this really clearly with some examples which have been done in various departments. It is very important to think about mapping along multiple dimensions to make sure we are connecting with as many grad workers as possible, this can include cohorts, advisors, labs, centers, student groups, and relational mapping. These different dimensions of mapping will not all be equally useful and overtime we often find the most important dimensions for a given department to reach everyone,

though we should at least continue to think of those other dimensions for the sake of comprehensive if not equal distribution. To map effectively, it really has to be a collective process and so we should aim to bring together a range of perspectives in our mapping exercises. There will likely be a core of organizers looking at mapping on a frequent basis, but it can be very helpful to invite others to participate in department mapping as well on a less frequent basis.

Example: Chemistry

This is a mapping that includes a few key features. Below we lay out some of the motivation and use cases. Keep in mind that these tools are not intended to be comprehensive (Airtable will be more effective for that), but that it should give us an easy way of mapping coverage along different dimensions for active organizers and proportion contacted thus far.

Disciplinary Divisions/Labs

We divide by divisions because students often take classes together based on division and then by labs because these end up being the people who chem students interact with the most, especially as years progress. We make sure to have divisions covered by our department coordinators and then aim to have at least one organizer per lab, sort of a proto-steward network. Our ultimate goal is to have roughly one trained organizer per group with a backup organizer to help out.

Student Groups

Chemistry has a lot of active student groups or department created student advisory groups. We see this as a natural place to identify leaders and it is also critical that we work well with these groups. Otherwise we can risk alienating potential allies and even turning departmental student leaders hostile towards us. We are stronger together and should aim to win these students over through collaboration, respect, and demonstrated leadership. If we are able to map out the support systematically in student groups, then we can work to build with those who are supportive and hesitant, also aiming to win over or work around those who are hostile.

Cohorts

We know cohorts are a critical way that students are connected to each other, especially in terms of social groups and experiences around academic hurdles. We need to keep in mind this dimension or risk missing a large portion of coverage. One dynamic to keep in mind especially is the way in which older students can often become somewhat jaded or dismissive towards younger students, making organizing of older students by younger students sometimes more challenging. As a result, organizing from older cohorts into younger cohorts is easier (especially through relationships as past TAs or mentors) compared to organizing older cohorts from younger cohorts.

It is also worth keeping the tenure of organizers in mind, putting more time into developing leaders who will be here for some time rather than those who are leaving soon. Those who are leaving soon can still offer connections and should not be neglected. Finally, concentration in a

cohort can present unique challenges. For instance, if all of the core organizers face quals at the same time of year then departmental activity can easily fall apart.

Organizer Development
This is an important area for us to keep the engine of recruitment in each department running. This is where we are keeping track of what steps people have gone through and what we should do next. We bring this up in our meetings to go through and make sure we have plans for all the folks who are showing promise as developing into active organizers or even union leaders.

Weekly coordination meetings

Now that we've covered the basics of department coordination, how can we start to build up the infrastructure to effectively coordinate within our departments? The first step is to establish weekly meetings between the core organizers in the department. At these meetings the core organizers should go over organizing conversation updates (discuss and collectively problem-solve the challenges, draw out sticking points, etc.) and plan out who they are speaking to next week. Discuss union updates so that the organizers can stay up to date and reference them in their organizing conversations. If we don't know what's going on in our own organization, then our conversations will be less effective. Political education is a good way to make the meetings more dynamic, increase participation, build up new leaders, and empower our organizers with union basics - e.g. one-on-one conversations, mapping, and more.

Meeting agendas
Prior to the meeting send out an agenda with allotted amounts of time for each topic. Here are some suggested agenda points that could be discussed in weekly coordination meetings.

- **Check-ins:** Checking in to see how core organizers are doing at the beginning of a meeting serves a variety of purposes. First, it helps to start the meeting off on a friendly and collaborative note. Ideally core organizers are not just coworkers but friends, their struggles are your struggles! We want to make sure we are making an effort to see how they are doing! Additionally, checking in with core organizers can help give coordinators a better picture for their capacity in the upcoming week. If one of the core organizers has a stressful or busy week, what can the others do to support them?
- **Organizing conversation updates:** Who did you talk to last week? Who are you planning on talking to next week? Work through challenges together! The collective problem-solving helps build confidence. If a new organizer has a bad conversation, it's likely to be their last if they don't work through what went wrong and what they can do better for the next one.These updates are good for accountability; we need to make sure we're driving growth, developing new organizers, and training new leaders at a pace required to go public in February! Discussing escalating the involvement of those we're talking to (including referencing what has worked and how we all got more deeply involved), is critical to building union leaders who can independently develop others! We want to be like seeds in our workplaces, experts in the struggle against the employer!

- **Political education:** Topics on political education can vary, but might include identifying issues, mapping the workplace, recruiting leaders, having one-on-ones, union FAQs. When paired with organizing, political education really helps nail down union approach. Political education gives organizers the opportunity to work through parts of union building they're less clear on, talking points they're less familiar with for more effective one-on-ones, and generally increases buy-in and connection to the organization. The more our organizers understand *why* we operate the way we do both organizationally and tactically, the more they feel like they have a stake in it and become more motivated to bring others in.
- **Union updates:** It's rare that anyone in the core group will be queued into every area of union work. Go through union updates: ISWG, RISE, Covid, Recruitment team, Department updates, etc. Ideally, cumulatively, the core organizers will cover every area of union work. Going through these updates is crucial so that they can be referenced in organizing conversations. We can't organize our co-workers into an organization we don't know much about! Having conversations isn't just about agitating around issues, but providing a solution -- that we need to build a union -- a vehicle through which we can work collectively to fight for justice on the job! But people at MIT have a good bullshit detector. If we're talking to an international student about issues around visa precarity for example, we should be able to reference informational town halls that the union has held and when the next one is scheduled, the need for more transparency, and resources and protections for international students. If the conversation is about advising issues and abuse, if we can't describe the contours of RISE, we're losing an opportunity to bring people into union activity. The work of the union at all layers demonstrates that we're already organizing around issues affecting our membership! It shows that the union's priorities are the priorities of the membership! And that only because of our collective, confrontational, and public approach have we been able to win some of the key demands! The same goes for departmental organizing updates around DEI, for example. It goes a long way to know how the department has responded to our demands or the state of negotiations (if that's where it's at) so as to show that either 1) the department is listening to us because we are applying pressure or 2) they are stonewalling us, which is more proof that we need a union.

Additional Resources

- Organizing Conversation Structure
- Airtable
- Tips for meeting with admin
- Political education materials
- On-boarding document
- START HERE
- Core organizer roles
- Department Status and Next Steps
- Active areas of work
    - Going Public Brief
    - ISWG

    - RISE
- Google drive
- Calendar

FOLLOW UP!!!
As we like to say, follow up is 90% of organizing! If we are trying to engage our contacts it is important to give them timely invitations to orientations and organizer training events. After these events have passed, follow up with your contacts to confirm attendance, see how it went, and where they might be interested in getting more plugged in. If they are interested in getting more involved, make sure to provide them with the details they need to do so, including point person, weekly meeting times, current projects, etc.

When it comes to following up on assigned tasks it can be helpful to do a midweek check-in on progress. With this follow up you can reiterate what they said they were doing and see how things are going. Remember -- we want to make sure we are always framing our follow ups in a supportive fashion. Asking questions like “how are things going?”, “do you have any questions?”, and “is there any way I can help or support you?” will frame the follow up in a more positive light than having it come across as you trying to make sure someone is on top of things and questioning whether they have done their task yet.